Simplicity and functionality are the basic principles that guide the establishment of IT infrastructure for small businesses. They need to have a strong network to connect employees who may be working from different locations. They must also keep a control on the costs that go into these technological setups. An integrated solution that combines network, data and voice applications to enable seamless collaboration can help such businesses to meet both these objectives and more.

Today, the managers of start-ups and small businesses don dozens of hats. They keep designing detailed comprehensive communication strategies that help them woo customers and become competitive in the market. They also try to equip their increasingly mobile workforce with new technologies to facilitate communication with clients and vendors around the cloud, from any location.

Young enterprises also need to keep pace with the evolving technological changes as everything gets connected via the Internet of Things (IoT). Some of the key trends that will be important for them include:

**Mobile web** – As more people check emails, shop, book services and process invoices via smartphones, mobile web is a necessity for businesses who had only invested in traditional desktop web services.

**Cloud services** – Devised to manage the information explosion, reduce the data storage costs and increase the flexibility at work, cloud platforms will attract more business users looking for efficient ways to store and share their applications and data.

**Social media** – This will be important as a business tool to develop, grow and personalise relationships with customers.

**IT on demand** – By leveraging the power of mobile devices used by their employees and cloud services, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) will be able to access new software systems and technologies without incurring the heavy costs of IT personnel and complex upgrades.

The new business model demands anytime, anywhere connectivity. It brings with it the need to have a smart office – an innovative, integrated solution that meets all the information and communication technology needs of an organisation. It should have a strong combination of technologies bundling voice, data, storage and enterprise applications.

Most business consultants recommend that SMEs should begin with the basics. Before deploying any other IT tools, they need to lay down the foundation for a secure network that can offer round-the-clock access to information and applications. It should keep the employees seamlessly connected to each other and to the customers. A reliable Internet service is also needed for the easy exchange of
information through data, voice and video apps. Furthermore, they should have a wireless strategy to offer access to meeting rooms, remote locations and customers’ offices – any place that employees need to visit to complete a task.

A start-up with a good network and Internet connectivity does not even need a physical office site for its workforce. Nevertheless, it can be a good idea to build a hybrid business model with a small office space for conferences and other operations. The directors and senior managers who find it more convenient to work and meet clients at the office can continue in their preferred conventional manner while employees at distant locations can take care of their obligations through the virtual office infrastructure. Cloud-based networking system and communication tools can be integrated for employees to stay in touch and share the data.

With the freedom to work from anywhere, employees are better motivated and their productivity levels are high with more quality. They have the option to design and customise their personal workspaces while having access to all the resources that the workforce at physical office locations has. Such employees are more likely to stay on schedule, accomplish better results and stick with their organisation for a long period of time.

For start-ups and SMEs, it is typically challenging to manage multiple technologies and devices, deal with different vendors and commit a significant CAPEX and OPEX when they try to set up virtual or hybrid office models. Tata Tele Business Services has addressed this problem by designing the SmartOffice – an efficient, robust, cost-effective and future-ready information and communication technology solution that offers functionalities of different devices in a single package.

A SmartOffice comes with IP-PBX, data router, Wi-Fi modem, firewall and DHCP server to set up the telecom architecture and network of a business. The solution does away with the need to establish separate data and voice infrastructure such as Basic Rate Interfaces, Primary Rate Interfaces and local PSTN gateways. It helps them to reduce their information and communication technology costs.

Your new venture can cut down on a significant part of its spending and still build a successful business with seamless correspondence between the workforce, clients and stakeholders. Talk to a Tata Tele Business Services representative to create your virtual or hybrid workspace using the SmartOffice.